

# **MRCOG LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

**for the**

## **YEAR 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

### **RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT OF REGIONAL COUNCILS**

#### **Policy: Support State funding for the seven State Planning & Development Districts**

Background: The Local Government Division of the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration currently funds each of the State's seven State Planning and Development Districts at an amount of \$53,457. We support continued funding and increases for the seven state Planning and Development Districts.

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

#### **Policy: Oppose legislation that would restructure State revenue sources resulting in the loss of revenue to local government, including removal of the gross receipts tax on the sale of food**

Background: During recent state Legislative sessions, bills have been introduced to create new deductions from the gross receipts and governmental gross receipts taxes. Such legislation would result in recurring losses that would have a devastating affect on the financial situation of local governments. Consequently, legislation should be opposed when it restructures revenue sources resulting in the loss of actual revenue to any local governments without compensating state or local taxing authority to offset revenue losses or hold harmless provisions to be paid from state resources.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Policy: Support dedicated funding for Public Transit Programs**

Background: In 2003, legislation was enacted to allow adjacent governmental units to join together to create regional transportation districts to develop and operate transit services across jurisdictional boundaries. The state recognized the need to allow the creation of organizations that can work effectively with local governmental units to provide effective transit services that support local and state policies. Transit services provided by a regional transit district will reflect the regional nature of transit service demands and ensure that elected officials from affected governmental units have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

Effective transit services support local land use and economic development plans, assist in meeting federal air quality requirements, and provide vital transportation for individuals who cannot or do not drive. Both state and local funds will be needed for these public transit services. The MRCOG supports the use of state transportation funds for Regional Transit Districts and the authorization of transit-dedicated tax authority for local governments.

### **WATER**

#### **Policy: Support continued state funding for regional water planning efforts administered through the Interstate Stream Commission, specifically dealing with the implementation phase and future updates of the Middle Rio Grande and Estancia Basin Regional Water Plans.**

Background: Since 1988, the New Mexico Legislature has been providing funds on an annual basis to qualified regional water planning agencies. Significant work has been done statewide on regional water plans and the funding program needs to fund the implementation phase of the plans, future updates of

the plans and water project funding. The MRCOG strongly encourage, due to limited initial funding, that the Legislature continue funding the regional planning effort on a state-wide basis, with special emphasis on funding implementation programs identified in the approved plans, and funding for updates of regional water plans. Legislation passed last legislation session now requires the regional water plans be integrated, where feasible, into the state water plan.

**Policy: Support legislation establishing a permanent funding mechanism and greater local government representation on the Water Trust Board.**

Background: A long-term permanent revenue source is needed to properly fund water and wastewater projects and manage the state's limited water resources. Presently, the funding process for the newly created Water Trust Board is based on yearly legislative appropriation and requires a long-term solution. In addition, of the fifteen members of the Water Trust Board only two represent counties and municipalities and MRCOG recommends more equitable representation for local governments.

**Policy: Support legislation and funding to adjudicate water rights for the Middle Rio Grande Basin within a reasonable time frame.**

Background: Water management policies and programs will effectively be hindered until an accurate accounting of who has the right to use what quantities of water and how they may use them. Although a statewide adjudication of water rights is necessary, the MRCOG supports funding to carry out a full adjudication process in the Middle Rio Grande Basin. The legislature should also use innovative approaches to enhance rapid resolution of adjudication issues.

## STATE PROGRAMS

**Policy: Urge the State to use existing regional service delivery systems wherever practical.**

Background: The state plays an important role in the funding of public services and programs administered at the regional and state level. The state should give consideration to which programs are implemented most appropriately at the local or regional level. State administration of federal programs can be problematic for local governments, as state agencies tend to be more removed from clients and less responsive to their needs. On the other hand, individual local governments may lack the resources to achieve the desired efficiencies and cost-effectiveness. Also, some programs, for example, transportation, air quality, homeland security, solid waste, and water management are most appropriately and effectively addressed at the regional level. The collaborative partnerships typical of regional approaches can provide the critical mass of users and clients for services and programs to be cost effective.